CLAIMS

1. A system for distributing content owned by a predetermined right owner, comprising:

a monitoring apparatus operable to monitor the distribution of the content by issuing authentication information indicating a consent to use the content; and

a distribution apparatus operable to distribute the content with the authentication information attached thereto via a predetermined distribution path.

2. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said monitoring apparatus obtains the content being distributed via said predetermined distribution path and determines the validity of the content distribution operation based on whether said authentication information is attached to the content.

3. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said authentication information includes time identification information showing the current time and distributor identification information assigned to the distribution apparatus.

4. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said monitoring apparatus issues an encryption key in addition to said authentication information, and said distribution apparatus distributes the content with the attached authentication information encrypted using said encryption key.

5. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said distribution apparatus embeds said authentication information into the content using a digital watermarking technique.

6. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said distribution apparatus embeds said authentication information into a distribution signal of the content using a digital watermarking technique.

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7. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein each content has specific content identification information, and said distribution apparatus stores a distribution history for each content distributed via said predetermined distribution path in association with its specific content identification information.

8. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said distribution apparatus stores a distribution history for each content distributed via said predetermined distribution path in association with its specific content identification information, ·and transfers only said distribution history associated with specific content by masking said distribution history with a predetermined filter.

9. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said distribution apparatus stores a distribution history for each content distributed via said predetermined distribution path in association with its specific content identification information, and said monitoring apparatus manages the distribution status of each content based on said distribution history.

10. A content distribution system according to claim 1, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said distribution apparatus stores a distribution history for each content distributed via said predetermined distribution path in association with its specific content identification information, and said monitoring apparatus causes content identification information by which said distribution history can be addressed to be contained in said authentication information.

11. A distribution method for distributing content owned by a predetermined right owner, comprising:

issuing to a distributor authentication information indicating a consent to use the content;

distributing the content via a predetermined distribution path with the authentication information attached thereto; and

monitoring the distribution of the content in the predetermined distribution path.

12. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein said monitoring step includes obtaining content being distributed in the predetermined distribution path and determining the validity of the content distribution operation based on whether the authentication information is attached to the content.

13. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein the authentication information includes time identification information showing the current time and distributor identification information assigned to the distributor.

14. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein said issuing step further includes issuing an encryption key, and said distributing step distributes the content with the attached authentication information encrypted using the encryption key.

15. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein said distributing step embeds the authentication information into the content using a digital watermarking technique.

16. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein said distributing step embeds the authentication information into a distribution signal of the content using a digital watermarking technique.

17. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said content distribution method further comprising:

storing a distribution history for each content distributed via the predetermined distribution path in association with its respective content identification information.

18. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said content distribution method further comprising:

storing a distribution history for each content distributed via the predetermined distribution path in association with its respective content identification information; and

extracting only the distribution history associated with specific content by masking the distribution history with a predetermined filter.

19. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said content distribution method further comprising:

storing a distribution history for each content distributed via the predetermined distribution path in association with its respective content identification information; and

managing the distribution of each content based on the distribution history.

20. A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said content distribution method further comprising:

storing a distribution history for each content distributed via the predetermined distribution path in association with its respective content identification information,

wherein the issuing step issues authentication information containing identification information by which the distribution history can be addressed.

21. An apparatus for monitoring the use of content owned by a predetermined right owner, comprising:

a device operable to issue to a distributor authentication information indicating a consent to use the content.

22. An apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said authentication information includes at least time identification information showing the current time and distributor identification information assigned to said distributor.

23. An apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said authentication information includes at least distributor identification information assigned to said distributor and identification information by which a distribution history of the content for said distributor can be addressed.

24. An apparatus according to claim 21, wherein an encryption key is issued to said distributor in addition to said authentication information.

25. An apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said authentication information is attached to content distributed based on said consent to use, said apparatus further comprising:

a unit operable to determine whether said authentication information is attached to distributed content.

26. An apparatus according to claim 21, further comprising:

a unit operable to manage a use status of the content based on a content use history of said distributor.

27. A method for monitoring use of content owned by a predetermined right owner, comprising:

issuing to a content user authentication information indicating a consent to use the content.

28. A content monitoring method according to claim 27, wherein the authentication information includes at least time identification information showing the current time and distributor identification information assigned to the content user.

29. A content monitoring method according to claim 27, wherein the authentication information includes at least distributor identification information assigned to the distributor and identification information by which a distribution history of the content for the content user can be addressed.

30. A content monitoring method according to claim 27, further comprising issuing to the content user an encryption key in addition to the authentication information.

31. A content monitoring method according to claim 27, further comprising:

using the content for which there is a consent to use with the authentication information attached thereto; and

determining whether the authentication information is attached to content being used.

32. A content monitoring method according to claim 27, further comprising:

managing a use status of the content based on a content use history of the content user.

33. An apparatus for using content after receiving a consent to use from a predetermined right owner, comprising:

a receiver operable to receive authentication information indicating the consent to use; and

a use unit operable to use the content with said authentication information attached thereto.

34. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said use unit distributes the content and said attached authentication information via a predetermined distribution path.

35. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said authentication information includes at least time identification information showing the current time and user identification information assigned to the user.

36. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said authentication information includes at least distributor identification information assigned to the distributor and identification information by which a use history of the content for the distributor can be addressed.

37. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said receiver is operable to receive an encryption key in addition to said authentication information, and said use unit uses the content with said attached authentication information encrypted using said encryption key.

38. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said use unit embeds said authentication information into the content using a digital watermarking technique.

39. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said use unit embeds said authentication information into a distribution signal of the content using a digital watermarking technique.

40. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said apparatus further comprising:

a storage unit operable to store a use history of each content used by said use unit in association with its specific content identification information.

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41. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said apparatus further comprising:

a storage unit operable to store a use history for each content used by said use unit in association with its specific content identification information; and

an extraction unit operable to extract only said use history associated with specific content from said storage unit by masking said stored use history with a predetermined filter.

42. A content using apparatus according to claim 33, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said apparatus further comprising:

a storage unit operable to store a use history for each content used by said use unit in association with its specific content identification information; and

a management unit operable to manage a use status of each content based on said stored use history.

43. A method for using content after receiving a consent to use from a predetermined right owner, comprising:

receiving authentication information indicating the consent to use; and

using the content with the authentication information attached thereto.

44. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein said using step distributes the content and the attached authentication information via a predetermined distribution path.

45. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein the authentication information includes at least time identification information showing the current time and user identification information assigned to the user.

46. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein the authentication information includes at least

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distributor identification information assigned to the distributor and identification information by which a use history of the content for the distributor can be addressed.

47. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein said receiving step receives an encryption key in addition to the authentication information, and said using step uses the content with the attached authentication information encrypted using the encryption key.

48. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein said using step embeds the authentication information into the content using a digital watermarking technique.

49. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein said using step embeds the authentication information into a distribution signal of the content using a digital watermarking technique.

50. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said method further comprising:

storing a use history for each content used in said using step in association with its specific content identification information.

51. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said method further comprising:

storing a use history for each content used in said using step in association with its specific content identification information; and

extracting only the use history associated with specific content by masking the stored use history with a predetermined filter.

52. A content using method according to claim 43, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said method further comprising:

storing a use history for each content used in said using step in association with its specific content identification information; and

managing a use status of each content based on the stored use history.